

PUTTING CHILDREN FRONT AND CENTER

BUILDING COHERENT SOCIAL POLICY FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN



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INTRODUCTION

Our nation is facing a crucial time for preparing our children to compete in an increasingly competitive economy and participate actively in a dynamic and evolving society. Achievement across the U.S. is stagnating and our intellectual position around the world is decliningⁱ. By enhancing our children's educational achievement, socio-emotional skills, and civic competence, we enhance their lives, offer every American child an equal opportunity to attain the American Dream, strengthen our democracy, and secure the United States' prominence in the global economy. The billions of dollars invested in children by Federal, state, and local governments, as well as corporations, foundations, and individual donors represent our social commitment to children, but they also signal significant flaws in the implementation of this commitment.

From health coverage to juvenile justice to education institutions, children are the beneficiaries of a wide range of social policies and investments: Head Start, Child Care and Development Block Grants, 21st Century Learning Centers, SCHIP/Medicaid, and the Workforce Investment Act are just a few examples of policies in place to support children as they grow and develop. We argue, citing the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth report and the GAO report on early education and careⁱⁱ, that these policies lack any semblance of coherence, do not encourage synergies across policies, and result in a system of competing demands and ineffective, and at times, insufficient investments in children.

FUTURE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS MUST BE DESIGNED TO STRESS THE STRENGTHS, RATHER THAN DEFICITS, THAT OUR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS POSSESS

In this paper, we take a step back and argue that policymakers should develop and reference a policy framework that is coherent, comprehensive and child-centered. We contend that such a framework must be both long (defining childhood as a developmental trajectory from in-utero to adulthood) and wide (considering both multiple dimensions of human development and the multiple contexts within which children live). It is our contention that current and future policies and/or the implementation of those policies should be mapped to this framework to determine the extent to which children's needs are well represented and approaches to addressing those needs have theoretical and empirical support.



We further argue that this framework and future policies and programs must be designed to stress the strengths, rather than deficits, that our children and their families and neighborhoods possess. For most of the 20th century, research, policies, and programs, particularly those that addressed poverty, focused on remediating the perceived deficits in neighborhoods, families and children rather than acknowledging and leveraging the strengths and positive networks and relationships that exist in contexts and individuals. However, this perspective is shifting thanks to groundbreaking research in the latter part of the century and must now be

represented in our approach to policy development. A large body of research has documented the strengths and success (i.e., resilience) of children who live in conditions that we have often defined as putting them at risk of failure, finding that resilience among these at-risk youth to be, as Masten (2001) writes, "ordinary, not extraordinary." It has also provided snapshots into the lives of children, families, and communities who have exhibited strength and success, overcoming challenges such as poverty, violence, and substance abuse. This shift has yet to be reflected in federal policy, and we

argue for the need to move from a framework of remediating deficits in a child's competencies and a child's environment to a framework that leverages the intrinsic resiliency of all children, families, and communities. Encouraging these internal resiliency processes with external developmental opportunities is an essential role of policymakers.

We believe that referencing a coherent, comprehensive, and child-centered framework at the outset and throughout the policymaking and implementation process will help policymakers and practitioners develop or refine policies and programs that are more effective and efficient. This framework, which focuses on promoting resilience instead of reducing deficits, will encourage the development of programs and policies that will result in successful academic, social and civic outcomes. In the pages that follow, we present our vision of a policy framework that puts children front and center.

THE FRAMEWORK

The goal of this paper is to propose a policy framework that is developmental, child-centered and reflects the experiences and strengths of children in a coherent, comprehensive way. As illustrated in Exhibit 1, we propose that policymakers should keep in mind three key criteria that underlie the framework we propose:

1. Commit to children for the long-term, across developmental periods (i.e., infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, and the transition to adulthood). Specifically, we recognize that, in order to be successful citizens, children need developmentally appropriate supports and experiences throughout their lives. In a world of limited resources, there is implicit and sometimes explicit competition for investment at different developmental stages—e.g., preschool versus high school.

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However, we know that the effect of early interventions phase out in later years if children do not continue to receive adequate supports and experiences^{iv}. And, we know that there is a cumulative effect of experiencing adequate supports such that older children often exhibit more positive outcomes and fewer challenges if they had experienced adequate developmental opportunities earlier in life^v. *Making a long-term commitment to America's children means creating policy and investing resources for children throughout their first two decades of life.*

2. Transcend institutional boundaries and acknowledge the depths of children's needs, experiences and strengths, including multiple developmental domains (i.e., physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and civic) and multiple developmental contexts (i.e., family, educational settings, community). Children live their lives in different and often changing contexts (family, schools, communities) and have a variety of different needs and strengths (intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and civic). Currently, policies and investments for children are developed and presented in stovepipes (e.g., health, justice, education) and typically divided by institutional boundaries (e.g., communities, schools, health providers). Rather than a coherent system of support or a coordinated combination of supports, our current policies and investments are a fragmented buffet from which a wide variety of stakeholders pick and choose. These choices are often made in isolation, rarely reflect the full range of children's needs and strengths, and fail to address their lives in the contexts within which they develop.

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¹ We define resilience as the intersection between the ability of an individual to adapt to a given environment and that given environment, whether high-risk or high-asset. For example, see Masten, A.S. (2001).

We further argue that succeeding in one domain of life – such as intellectual or academic – is not sufficient to transition successfully into adulthood and be a productive citizen. Instead, young people need to develop across multiple domains. Because of this multiple domain concept, singular approaches to child and youth development will not sufficiently prepare young people for life. For example, a high quality math tutoring program might very well improve a child's math skills, but such a program will not help to guide the child through the trials and tribulations that characterize the first two decades of life. Therefore, a comprehensive policy framework is needed that addresses children and youths' multiple needs and occurs across multiple contexts'i. *Using the best practices supported by rigorous research, policymakers should support programs that address the multiple needs of families and young people, coordinate funding across disparate agencies that each address a component of a child's well-being, and fund demonstration projects to test new models for systemic community change.*

3. Take a child-centered approach that defines need and progress on an individual level instead of only a group level. Policy and research have historically focused on the aggregate status or growth among groups or subgroups (e.g., 'children' or 'African-American children') or conditions (e.g., poverty) in an attempt to locate problems and implement solutions. Desired outcomes have been defined and measured by the array of programs offered on a macro-level, such as various



child social welfare programs, or by the progress of one group compared to another subgroup; for example, reductions in achievement gaps between impoverished children and their wealthier counterparts. Until recently, there has been little if any consideration for the individual children who fall into these groups. Economic, geographic, gender, racial/ethnic, and cultural groups have historically been viewed as homogeneous (e.g., "all poor kids are at risk for school failure") and their progress is measured by the average of the group, rather than by individual trajectories. Policies and programs are not conceptualized and implemented with the unique, individual needs of children front and center and therefore many children are stranded when they most need a comprehensive set of supports or they are provided services for a deficit they do not possess.

Recent research has strongly suggested that policy and/or program effects at a group level do not necessarily represent effects on an individual level^{vii}; that is, the mean effect of the group may have moved in a positive direction, but the effect on a substantial number of individuals within that group do not improve or minimally improve. We therefore argue that focusing on broader groups instead of individual needs can lead to an inefficient, more costly system of services. For example, using income as a key determinant for success – a so-called 'social address' methodology - results in a sledgehammer approach to interventions when a more precise screwdriver is necessary to tighten the supports that a subset of children in low-income families need, such as extra tutoring, social skills development, and additional supportive adult relationships. While we acknowledge that community- or group-level interventions are necessary, such as focusing on the proliferation of low-quality schools in high-poverty neighborhoods, we argue that sufficient evidence exists to show that there are multiple risk and protective factors within a given group membership, which should be taken into account when policies and programs are developed and implemented.^{viii}

Therefore, a more predictive, actionable and cost-effective child-centered approach should be implemented concurrently, using cutting-edge integrated data systems to assess and track the comprehensive needs of young people and coordinate the resources available to them.

In the next section, we lay-out the evidence-base for our framework.² First, to support our contention that a *long* view is necessary for public policy, we will discuss the stages of development and the cumulative development of children across stages. We will support our claim that each stage, in and of itself, is important to a successful transition to the next stage of development and ultimately to a successful transition to adulthood. That is, successes at each stage cumulate so that successful transitions early in life lead to improved child outcomes and more efficient investments in later stages of childhood and into adulthood. We will also emphasize that transitions across stages, too often ignored in policy and practice, are essential to the developmental equation.

Second, to support our *wide* view, we will discuss the unique effects of the contexts within which a child develops, including the family, school and community, on physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and civic outcomes. We will argue that none of the contexts operate within a developmental or social vacuum. Instead, the effects of contexts cumulate and interact just as developmental stages cumulate and interact. Additionally, the contexts need to fit and transition with the developmental needs of a particular child.

The final section of the paper will consider our framework with regard to recent social policy for children and youth. We posit that historical and current social policy debates take a myopic view of children and that a 'longer' and 'wider' approach is needed. We end with recommendations for improving the development and implementation of social policies and thus the short- and long-term social, academic, moral, and civic outcomes of our children and young adults.

EXHIBIT 1

THE FRAMEWORK: A THREE-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO CHILD-CENTERED POLICY

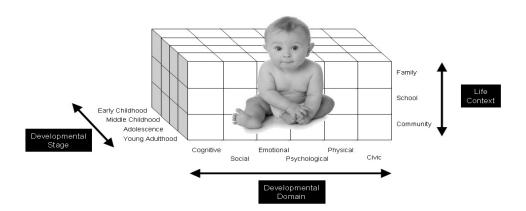


Exhibit 2 illustrates the current state of public policies focused on children and youth; programs exist in each of the developmental blocks, but they are not aligned. This lack of alignment, we argue, results in an inefficient and ineffective delivery of supports. By aligning supports across time, contexts and domains, as expressed in Exhibit 3, children and youth will be put on a path to academic success, social competence and civic involvement.

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² An in-depth analysis of the available child and youth development research is outside of the scope of this paper. We refer the reader to three National Academy of Sciences report for a deeper review: Shonkoff & Phillips (2000), Eccles & Gootman (2002), National Research Council (2003). Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

EXHIBIT 2

THE CURRENT APPROACH OFFERS FRAGMENTED CHILDREN'S POLICIES

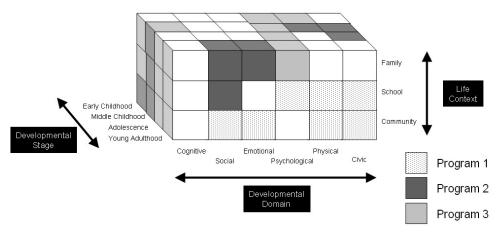
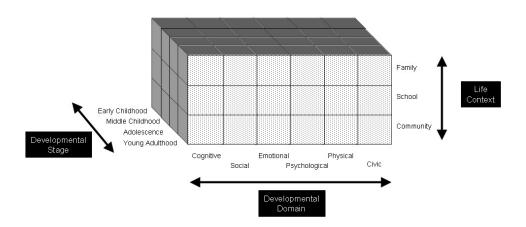


EXHIBIT 3

THE GOAL: POLICIES ALIGNED ACROSS DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES, DOMAINS, AND CONTEXTS³



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³ The concept of the cube was developed separately by Brim & Phillips (1988) and the Forum for Youth Investment (FYI). Brim & Phillips use domain, age and target population as the three axes and the Forum for Youth Investment uses domain, age and time-of-day as the three axes (www.forumfyi.org). We take the recommendation from FYI to change any of these axes to conform to the needs of the user. For policymakers, we believe that focusing on the contexts within which a child lives and develops is helpful in order to link these contexts.

reflecting a commitment to children for the long-term.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Childhood is not a homogeneous block of time with homogeneous resources, needs, barriers, and opportunities for development. Indeed, childhood is marked by numerous developmental stages and transitions across stages from prenatal through the transition to adulthood. As the early founders of developmental science have conjectured, the successful completion of one stage of development and the transition to the next stage of development are essential to the success across subsequent stages of development^{ix}.

Science has continued to confirm these early theories and research studies. Beginning in the womb, the fetus begins to develop the foundational neural architecture of the brain. Infants and toddlers, from 0-3 years of age, develop the basic physical, cognitive and social attributes that enable the subsequent young child to interact appropriately with peers, master language, develop empathy, and begin to read.* As the child enters the pre-kindergarten and early elementary school years, he or she will understand social norms, develop the beginnings of a moral compass, manipulate letters and

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numbers, interact with a greater breadth of peers, and develop deeper friendships. Pubertal changes in the early adolescent years reflect the continuing biological changes that occur throughout childhood, with the brain continuing to form and strengthen existing neural connections, and with corresponding development of academic competencies, problem-solving, negotiation, conflict resolution, among other cognitive and social competencies. xi In addition, positive characteristics such as academic achievement and social competence cluster and positively reinforce each other, while negative characteristics also cluster and negatively reinforce each other xii. For example, high levels of anxiety are related to lower levels of academic achievement, but when anxiety was programmatically decreased, academic achievement increased.xiii

CUMULATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT CHILDHOOD

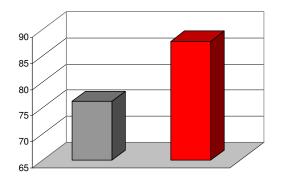
Cunha and Heckman's (2006) research also suggests a cumulative effect of socioemotional and cognitive developmental experiences on later developmental outcomes. Thus, as Heckman and Cunha posit, 'skill begets skill' and 'learning begets learning.' The effects of both cognitive and socioemotional development on academic, social and vocational outcomes demonstrate the need to move the child policy dialogue past a sole focus on cognitive/academic development and include socioemotional/non-academic factors essential to the healthy development of children, the workforce and society. Others have found socioemotional adjustment in early childhood predicting academic achievement into late adolescence.xiv As Moore and Zaff (2003) concluded from a review of over 1,100 empirical studies on adolescent well-being, adolescent and subsequent adulthood outcomes are maximized when formative experiences and environments start early and are sustained over time. This dynamic can be seen in children with externalizing problem in early to middle childhood having lower rates of academic success in adolescencexv. Additionally, negative attributes in early childhood, such as being impulsive, restless and distractible can have long-standing effects on social and emotional behaviors into adulthood.xvi

Head Start provides a concrete example of the need for consistent investments throughout childhood that address both cognitive and socioemotional domains (and, as is often the case in early childhood programs, the health domain is included, too). This Federal program for preschool children in poverty provides a comprehensive set of health, education and socioemotional services in a center-based setting. In estimating the effects of Head Start, Currie and Thomas find short-term gains on cognitive, social and health indicators, but that these effects dissipate in elementary school, primarily

among African-American children. XVII Currie and Thomas find that one empirically tested reason for this dissipation is that African-American Head Start children are more likely to attend lower quality schools than their non-Head Start attending African-American or white peers. White children who attend Head Start are also more likely to attend higher quality schools.

Proponents of aligning pre-K programs with elementary school compellingly cite evaluations of the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, extended version of the Carolina Abecedarian Project and the now-defunct Head Start/Follow Through program to show the additive benefit of continuing and/or aligning investments past the pre-K period. The line with the contextual needs of young children, early childhood and PreK-3 programs leverage the influence of parents and teachers to create enriching learning environments. Teaching children in small classrooms in the early years of elementary schools, as was done in Project STAR, show that being in small classes for four years

results in an 11.5 percentage point increase in high school graduation rates over those children who were in full-size classes^{xx}. Intriguingly, significant impacts were only found for children who were in small classes for the full four years. Those in small classes for just one to three years did not experience comparable benefits. Rigorously evaluated prenatal programs such as Nurse-Family Partnership show that starting interventions with the pregnant mother and continuing through the first two-years of a child's life can have sustained impacts on a child's cognitive, social and physical well-being.xxi These prenatal programs are especially pertinent considering evidence that low parental economic status predicts poor birth outcomes, and poor birth outcomes predict long-term negative health,



PROJECT STAR SHOWED THAT SMALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSES INCREASE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES BY MORE THAN 11 PERCENTAGE POINTS

education and economic outcomes in adulthood.^{xxii} We would posit that greater impacts would be seen by linking the prenatal interventions like Nurse-Family Partnership with early childhood programs.

Investments are obviously not only apparent in early childhood education. However, policymakers and practitioners make an implicit assumption about children that they need to impart fewer supports once children enter adolescence. This assumption is made possibly because there is a historical hold-over from previous generations that considered childhood to be a somewhat culturally constructed phenomenon with an end-point much earlier than it is today; xxiii because the assumption is that an adolescent is at a maturational stage in which he or she can create his or her environment and traverse environmental – and psychological – obstacles with aplomb; xxiv or possibly because adolescents are no longer in the 'cute' stage of development and are considered by adults to be beyond repair – or, for that matter, reproach. Xxv Evidence from recent neuroscience, however, suggests that the adolescent brain is continuing to develop the structures for problem-solving, decision-making and higher-order reasoning. Xxvi Additionally, psychologists and sociologists continue to provide evidence that intervening during adolescence over time and with adequate dosage can mitigate the most severe environmental and individual risks, or build off of the most stable and supportive base.

The Quantum Opportunities Program, Teen Outreach Program, and Across Ages are intensive youth development programs for middle and high school students. They include long-term engagement with supportive relationships with an adult who is accountable for the child's well-being and who connects the child to educational activities, community service activities, and career and college planning. Quantum Opportunities is particularly intensive, with a total of 750 hours of programming per year for four years. Built into the theory of this program design is that short-term strategies are

not effective in impacting long-term change. This theory is verified by research showing a dissipation of effects for shorter term programs xxviii and greater effects for consistent attendance in programs. Xxviii Longitudinal studies of after-school activity participation also provide evidence of consistency, for instance showing that youth who participate in enriching activities from middle school through high school are much more likely to attend college and participate in civic activities. XXIII The evaluations of the programs show increased school engagement, including fewer suspensions and dropouts and more high school graduates, and decreased rates of teenage birth and arrest rates.

Unfortunately, the link between early childhood, early elementary school and adolescent experiences has received little attention, possibly because policymakers and practitioners have assumed that schools provide the infrastructure to facilitate such transitions. Research suggests that these transitions and support across the transitions are critical to successful development. For example, Citizen Schools, started in Boston, but now expanding to several states throughout the country, provides an example of a program designed to link one developmental period with the next – in this case early adolescence with adolescence. The Citizen Schools model



targets middle school children with vocational and civic experiential learning and, through a relationship with a caring adult, are guided through the transition to high school. This linking of early adolescent and middle-to-late adolescent time periods has appeared, based on preliminary data, to boost students' academic achievement and social skills. The Federally funded Gear-Up program, which funds programs to guide seventh graders through their secondary school years and then provide grants for college, provides an excellent public policy example, though rigorous evaluations of the program's effectiveness are not currently available. In addition, the Graduation Promise Act, recently introduced in Congress, would provide grants to local education agencies that could be used in the middle schools that feed into high schools with high rates of drop-outs.

TRANSCENDING INSTITUTIONAL BOUNDARIES AND ACKNOWLEDGING THE DEPTH AND BREADTH OF CHILDREN'S NEEDS AND EXPERIENCES

COGNITIVE, SOCIOEMOTIONAL AND HEALTH DOMAINS

Cognitive benefits from early childhood, preK and childhood interventions only signal part of the overall impact that early experiences have on future success. **xxxi** Indeed, school readiness researchers have determined that cognitive skills are not enough to prepare a child for elementary school - health and socioemotional factors need to be addressed, as well. **xxxi** Higher blood lead levels, higher rates of asthma and poor nutrition are just a few of the health-related outcomes that negatively impact a child's school attendance and achievement, brain functioning, and psychological well-being. **xxxi** Moreover, although impacts on IQ from early interventions have been found not to sustain into adulthood, socioemotional skills, such as motivation and persistence, appear to be critical drivers for academic, workforce and social success. Socioemotional skills affect future cognitive development and cognitive skills affect future socioemotional development**

As an example, intensive, early childhood programs among relatively small samples of children, such as the Carolina Abecedarian Project, xxxv High/Scope Perry Preschool, xxxvi and much larger numbers of children, such as the pre-K version of the Chicago Child-Parent Centers xxxvii have been shown to have long-term effects on academic and social outcomes, with benefit-to-cost ratios exceeding 7 to 1 in some cases. These effects remain even though cognitive impacts, such as IQ scores, regress to the mean over time. As an example of this dynamic, one can imagine a young child that successfully learns a task will have increased motivation to learn additional tasks. The subsequent learning builds off of the previously learned task; again in the words of Heckman and Cunha, 'skill begets skill and learning begets learning.'xxxviii Examining the importance of socioemotional skills for older children, Zin and colleagues (2006) synthesized socioemotional learning



programs for school-aged children and youth. The authors concluded that such programs result in increased attendance rates, decreased school drop-out rates, and increases in academic achievement; not to mention improvements in interpersonal relationships, motivation, and other social and emotional skills essential for the workforce. xxxix

The need for focusing on socioemotional skills, as well as cognitive skills, is further illustrated by the current and future workforce needs in America. The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary



Skills in the early 1990s put together a comprehensive list of the skills needed for a globally competitive workforce. Skills ranged from the basic, such as math, science and reading competencies, to the thinking, such as creativity and decision-making, to the interpersonal, such as responsibility, integrity, honesty and sociability. A recent workshop conducted by the Center for Education at the National Academy of Sciences on future workforce skills (2007), reaffirmed that the skills considered essential over a decade ago continue to be relevant in today's hyper-technology world.

CONTEXTS OF DEVELOPMENT

The developmental progressions in the previous section occur within social contexts that evolve in concert with the child, providing opportunities and challenges to successful transitions across developmental stages.

During the earliest years, the child resides mostly within the mother's, father's and/or guardian's reach. During this time, when the parents are not available – for example, when both parents or a single-parent work during the day – child care settings present an additional formative context during these years. As children age, their environments expand with them. Pre-K and elementary school-age children are confronted with school contexts that include relationships with non-family adults and peers, social structures, and academic challenges. Children at this point are given more flexibility to experience their wider communities, whether with their parents or, as they are allowed by their parents to explore farther afield, on their own and with their peers. Adolescence presents an upheaval of sorts for youth: Pubertal changes, larger social networks, social cliches, sexual and other social stresses, less intimate schools and classrooms, larger academic course loads and increased academic stress, among other challenges. Adolescence also presents numerous opportunities for youth to develop

their own identity, prepare themselves academically and socially for adulthood, and explore and give back to their communities.

INTERVENING IN ONE
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AND SCHOOL

Numerous studies and reviews have concluded that interventions that occur in multiple contexts – or, correspondingly, contexts that are rich in developmental opportunities - are more apt to affect outcomes across academic, social and civic domains than programs that focus on only one context. This holds for early childhood, in middle childhood and adolescence. Research provides evidence that there is a cumulative effect of growing up in a home that is less intellectually, physically and socially stimulating which can put children at risk of developmental

challenges. Research also suggestions that not exclusively, but on average such conditions are more likely to occur in low-income families. Also, these contexts affect the well-being of children in addition to and substantially above and beyond the effects of individual level risk, sliv showing that creating policies that change contexts could help children to overcome their personal adversities.

Importantly, protective factors within one context, such as developmentally appropriate rules,

expectations and regulations, can moderate the effects of deleterious risk factors in the same context as well as risk factors across other contexts.xlv In short, this means that intervening in one context, such as the family can have positive effects on other contexts, such as the neighborhood and school. One can imagine that attentive and supportive parents who are engaged in their child's development will ensure that there is a strong connection with schooling and that the child is guided to positive settings in the community. By intervening in multiple contexts, one may conjecture even greater effects. We would not, however, recommend intervening in these contexts as if each context operated in a vacuum. Instead, we would hypothesize that linking these contexts with each other would result in exponential academic and socioemotional growth; for example, the social, academic and civic lessons learned in school should reinforce experience in after-school experiences, and vice versa.



Before describing the content of these contexts, we note that childhood is not a product of nature or nurture. Consensus has landed on a dynamic interaction between nature and nurture to explain the dynamic processes of human development. xlvi As noted above, separately describing intra-individual development and contextual factors that affect development can give the erroneous impression that these forces occur in parallel. On the contrary, the internal development of the child and the contextual factors work in concert within a given time period and across time periods. This interaction results in developmental progression, stagnation, or regression depending on the individual and contextual attributes. Bronfenbrenner talks about this dynamic as part of a bioecological model of development in which each layer of an individual's life (him/herself, their family, their school, their peer relationships, the school and community infrastructure, public policy, etc.) interacts with each other as well as interacting with the developmental trajectory of an individual child.xlvii On a more micro-level, Eccles has considered this dynamic as a person-environment fit, in which the formative context within which a child develops needs to be developmentally matched to the existing attributes and needs of the child.xlviii Using the school context as an example, Eccles and colleagues have shown that a mismatch between context and student can result in poorer school attitudes and academic achievement.

In this section on contexts, we describe the research evidence for specific aspects within family, school and community that could be the focus of public policy strategies.

Interestingly, there are general features that promote positive outcomes across these contexts. The National Research Council/Institute of Medicine Committee on Programs that Promote Youth Development synthesized the vast youth development literature to arrive at eight factors that are essential to effective youth programming (see Appendix A for a summary). These factors correspond with other positive youth development frameworks, such as the 40 Developmental Assets, the Six C's, Communities that Care, the factors distilled by Connell and colleagues and the Five Promises

developed by America's Promise.xlix All of these frameworks

consider the need for:

 Supportive relationships for children (e.g., parents, teachers, other adults in the community and formal mentors);

- Meaningful, substantive and skill-building opportunities in and out of school;
- Safe environments in and out of the house;
- Making a difference in the community; and
- Sufficient structure and positive social norms that help to guide the child's behavior.

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In addition, whether explicitly or implicitly, *these frameworks reflect the need for the integration of the family, school and community contexts.* Importantly for policymakers, each of these contexts can be affected by external forces, such as community economic development, workforce quality, workfamily policies, affordable housing, economic well-being, and job security.

A powerful theme that cuts across the contexts is having a relationship with one or more caring adults. These adults will hopefully include the parents as supports, resources, and guides. The network of adults in a child's life, however, can extend beyond the family, either in addition to parents, or to counteract challenges that children face at home or in their communities. Formal mentoring relationships, which comprise either a one-to-one relationship between a child and a nonfamily adult or a group relationship between several children and one non-family adult, have been found to improve academic and social outcomes for youth and to decrease negative behaviors, such as violent behaviors and alcohol and drug use. Importantly for policymakers when considering initiatives to expand the pool of mentors for children and youth, the research base for mentoring is clear that mentors should have previous experience working with children, make a commitment to the mentee for at least 12 months, and need support and training in their work with the mentee. Such relationships can extend beyond formal mentoring, with coaches, teachers, guidance counselors, or other adults in the community taking a child under his or her wing and guiding the child through the transitions in his or her life. Although we do not describe mentoring relationships within each sub-section on contexts, we stress that strong relationships with adults who provide supportive and structured environments, and guide the child through their development are essential to the healthy development of all children.

FAMILY

The family context has been conceptualized as having multiple components. For our purposes, we consider the family context to consist of the parent-child relationship, including both the quality of the relationship and the engagement of the parents in the child's schooling; the family system, which includes the various factors within the family, such as the parents' and child's mental health and economic stresses; and family investments. Importantly, we note that family factors begin in utero. The environment within the womb, influenced by, among other things, the mother's nutrition and exposure to environmental stresses and toxins, impacts the neurobehavioral development of the fetus. In the constant of the fetus.

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

The family context is often considered synonymous with parent-child relationships. The quality of the parent-child relationship, modeling of behaviors and attitudes by parents, monitoring of children's behaviors, and approach to parenting (e.g., caring and supportive coupled with concrete rules) are all

related to better academic, social, physical and civic outcomes throughout childhood. Itii More academic-focused factors, such as helping the child with homework, reading to younger children, and being involved in the child's life in school are all related to greater school engagement, lower absenteeism and better academic outcomes. Iv Parental academic expectations are a prime predictor of cognitive and academic outcomes, as well, with parents' socioeconomic status strongly predicting these expectations. Iv These effects are even more prominent for low-income children. For example, in a study by Dearing and colleagues, gaps in



achievement between children in low-income and high-income families dissipate when the low-income children have parents who are highly engaged in their school.^{lvi}

Model programs have been developed for parents of very young children. The Nurse-Family Partnership model focuses first on the neonatal through 2-year-old period of development. The model has been experimentally tested and provides compelling evidence that NFP works, with children whom they followed for 15 years, having a 48 percent reduction in abuse/neglect, 59 percent reduction in arrests, and 90 percent reduction in adjudications for incorrigible behaviors. Nurses trained in the NFP model provide home visits to enrolled women during their pregnancy. The nurses address proper nutrition and other healthy behaviors (e.g., no smoking or drinking) during pregnancy, risk factors during pregnancy, preparation for labor and delivery, basics of newborn care, and use of office-based prenatal care.

After the birth of the child, the nurses continually assess the developmental progression of the child and, with the parent, address nutrition and overall health of infants and toddlers, well-care health visits for the child, and caring and supportive parenting styles.

For slightly older children, the Chicago Parent-Child Centers (CPC) have been hailed as a successful model for parental involvement. CPC centers, with 24 centers located in high poverty neighborhoods throughout Chicago, focus on preK-3rd graders with small classes, assure that children receive proper nutrition, and curriculum aligned with the developmental needs of the students. Parents are



expected to volunteer at the school at least once per week. In turn, a staff member engages parents in their children's schooling and the program provides an onsite parent room to equip parents with the skills and materials to continue their children's learning outside of the CPC centers. School staff makes home visits to reinforce these skills.

In potentially the most comprehensive review and meta-analysis of parent involvement on a child's academic achievement, Nye, Turner and Schwartz (2006) analyzed data from 18 randomized-controlled experimental studies over the past 40 years which focused on students in elementary school. In short, they found that parental involvement matters and interventions can be implemented to increase parental involvement in children's lives. More specifically, across academic content areas, they found that parental involvement increased student performance by nearly one-half of a standard deviation, which is equivalent to a student being in the 66th percentile of performance compared to a student without parental involvement who would be in the 50th percentile. The largest and most consistent impacts were seen on reading achievement, with math and science interventions varying from having substantial, positive impacts to having no statistical impact on academic outcomes. We note, though, that the positive effect of a caring and supportive parent-child relationship can be confounded by the values of the parents. For instance, a girl whose mother internalizes gender stereotypes about females being deficient in math and science or math and science jobs not being preferred vocations for females, will have a higher likelihood of being unmotivated to excel in math and science; and, therefore, not do as well as she could. Viiii

FAMILY SYSTEM

The family system is more complex than the parent-child relationship and includes more members than just parent and child. The health and well-being of multiple family members, not just parents, can impact the well-being of the child. As often cited, maternal characteristics such as mental health problems and low literacy can adversely affect the child's cognitive school readiness and social behaviors. And, father involvement is uniquely implicated in the well-being of their children, net of the effects of the mother, with more involved fathers having children with lower rates of risky behaviors, such as drug use and delinquent behavior. However, the interaction between parents, where both are present, can have a unique effect on children. Marital conflict, for example, can lead to poorer parent-child relationships and thus to poor child outcomes. Poor spousal communication and high conflict is related to poor parent-child attachment and poor sociability of young children with lower parent-child conflict, resulting in negative effects on younger and older adolescents' psychological well-being. When conflict results in divorce, children are at a high risk for depression and behavior problems in school, in the community and at home.

Stressors faced by families are deterrents to a child's long-term well-being. Shaw, Vondra, Hommerding, Keenean and Dunn (1994) found that extreme poverty, crowded housing, parental depression, and marital discord were related to higher rates of externalizing and internalizing problems, such as aggression and depressed moods. Low parental socioeconomic status is also related to poorer cognitive skills and more behavior problems among children entering Pre-K, lav and this effect is exacerbated by poor health at birth and a lack of other parental resources, such as health insurance. lavi

INVESTMENTS MADE ON THE FAMILY-LEVEL CAN HAVE INDIRECT EFFECTS ON CHILD WELL-BEING. FOR INSTANCE THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT CAN RAISE A YOUNG CHILD'S SCHOOL PERFORMANCE BY 6%.

FAMILY INVESTMENTS

Investments can be construed as direct investments that parents make in their children and investments made in the family which have an indirect effect on their children. The time and money that families invest in their child's well-being is related substantially to the children's prospects for their futures. This helps explain why family poverty is linked with lower academic skills and achievement, with more pronounced effects found for persistent poverty during early childhood than in later years. [xviii] In Cunha and Heckman's (2006) study of human capital investments throughout childhood, they found that experiences within the family, including books in the home, visits to cultural institutions, and time spent together, accounted for a substantial amount of variance for long-term outcomes such as graduating from high school, attending college, staying away from criminal

activity, and not relying on the welfare system. This is consistent with research into family-level social capital, including encouragement from a parent for post-secondary education, parental educational goals, and the availability of reading materials at home as a proxy for educational resources in the home. Those with high levels of this type of social capital are 6-7 times more likely to complete high school and 2-3 times more likely to have a higher income in adulthood. It is, ensuring that children have adequate cognitive and social resources within the home and within the family system would go a long way to improving the odds of academic success.

Investments made on the family-level can have indirect effects on child well-being. Work-contingent income supplements, as found in welfare reform experiments, have been found to impact the academic outcomes of young children above and beyond work-first mandates and other employment policies. his That is, providing additional income to working families, for instance \$3,000 through the Earned Income Tax Credit, can raise a preschool child's academic achievement .18 standard deviations, increasing a young child's academic standing from the 50th percentile to approximately the 56th percentile. Considering that living in poverty can have long-term impacts on the educational achievement, social behaviors and lifetime earnings of children, his these impacts are not inconsequential.

However, other researchers have found differential effects based on the level of family risk, such as income supplements having a positive impact on children in medium risk families, but either no impact or a negative impact on children in high risk families. The researchers find evidence that the differential impact could be explained by other stresses in the family system, such as maternal depression, reductions in regular family routines, and use of center-based child care.

These studies emphasize the need to focus on multiple factors within a context (e.g., family investments and the family system) as well as focusing across contexts (e.g., child care quality).

SCHOOL4

Educational settings such as schools and early child care centers, which could be considered a microcosm of greater society, are essential contexts for the development of the child. Although the research on educational settings is varied and sometimes inconsistent regarding findings and recommendations, there is a general consensus on at least one point: there is no silver bullet for improving schools and learning. There is, however, a rich literature that provides insights into what matters. Here, we focus on a wide body of literature that provides insights into what works and emphasize the factors within educational settings that are associated with student achievement.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION⁵

Most notably, high quality early childhood education and pre-K programs appear to impact the cognitive, social and health outcomes of children. As described earlier, the Abecedarian Project, Perry Preschool and the Chicago Parent-Child Centers have all been rigorously evaluated and have all shown cost-effective impacts on high school graduation, earnings in adulthood, reductions in criminal behaviors, and reductions in reliance on welfare. Although the generalizability of these studies is up for debate, since Abecedarian and Perry served small samples of disadvantaged children in unique community settings, evaluations of state-wide pre-K programs and Head Start have shown short-term effects. Nareoever, pre-K-to-3rd grade programs (i.e., programs that intentionally link the experiences in pre-K to K-3) have also shown promising effects. An example of one such program is the Chicago Parent-Child Center study described earlier in this paper. Despite long-term impacts

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⁴ For purposes of this paper, we use the term 'schools' instead of educational settings, even though we include early childhood programs, which typically reside outside of traditional school buildings.

⁵ We recognize that early childhood education programs often times take place in what would be considered community settings, especially for 0-3 year-olds. For the purposes of this paper, we consider these programs as an education context.

cited in studies of the Abecedarian Project and Perry Preschool, research on the impact of early childhood interventions has found that effects dissipate over time. These early experiences and successes have little chance of impacting individuals over their lives if not followed-up with quality educational experiences, as well as nurturing community and family contexts. Lixary Practitioners and policymakers should therefore recognize that the purpose of early childhood education programs is to ensure that children are ready for the cognitive and socioemotional challenges of elementary school.



Reynolds, Magnuson and Ou (2006) identified four shared principles of effective preK-3 programs. These principles are also consistent with our framework which supports consistent investments over time and the need to address the multiple domains and contexts of a child's life. They are: 1) continuity/consistency and time in learning (e.g., school stability; reducing negative effects of mobility; peer group consistency), 2) organizational/structural characteristics (e.g., leadership, small class-sizes and child-teacher ratios), 3) instruction (e.g., teacher training, school quality, curriculum alignment), and 4) family support services (e.g., home visits, parent centers in school).

Often, comprehensive school reform (CSR) strategies across all grade levels reflect these principals and there are a small number of rigorous research studies that provide empirical support for these principles at the elementary school level. In a meta-analysis of the 29 most widely implemented CSR models, Borman and colleagues (2002) found three models (Direct Instruction, Schools Development Program, and Success for All) that have sufficient evidence to show

effectiveness across a diversity of sites and a diversity of students. Although each of these programs is unique, they all: 1) address the governance and structure of the schools to encourage schools to run more efficiently and serve students more directly through smaller learning environments; 2) use research-based curricula for reading, writing and math; and 3) engage the broader community by including parents in the decision-making for the schools. Similar principles have been found for high school through rigorous evaluations of Career Academies, First Things First, Project Graduation Really Achieves Dreams (GRAD), and Talent Development. Project Graduation Because the community engagement piece has been alluded to through this paper, we focus on the first two principles, which are specific to schools. Before describing these principles in more detail, we note that the CSR programs, regardless of their apparent success, still leave a large percentage of students behind, possibly half of students not ready to graduate. One may conjecture that if CSR initiatives more intentionally integrated community and family interventions that address students' non-academic needs, they may be even more effective.

SMALL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS/PERSONALIZATION OF SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Creating environments that encourage small group discussions, one-on-one teaching and counseling, and intimate peer interactions are believed to result in a better learning environment. Students in turn who believe they are cared for by adults in the school community, believe they matter to these adults and feel a sense of belonging to the school put more effort into schooling. Within these teacher-student relationships (and student-student relationships) should be high and clear expectations for academic success as well as conformity to standards and rules — what has been termed 'academic press.' Personalization in turn means that teachers "[to] know and share information about students' emotional, academic, and social needs, strengths, and weaknesses"; create "strategies and interventions that are developmentally appropriate" for their different students; and develop effective partnerships on behalf of students with parents and other teachers. hxxx

Reducing class size is one potential way to create such environments. The most notable class-size experiment, Project STAR, evaluated the impacts of smaller teacher-student ratios among approximately 6,500 students in 330 K-3 classrooms in 80 schools in Tennessee. This experimental evaluation randomly assigned students either to classrooms with 13 to 17 students, 22 to 25 students, or 22 to 25 students with an additional classroom aid. Across the K-3 classrooms, students in smaller classes on average performed 8 percentile



points higher than those in regular classrooms, regardless of the presence of an aide. Paxxi Project STAR was expanded through Project Challenge, in which 17 school districts in Tennessee restructured their classes to decrease class size. These low-income districts improved their state ranks for second graders by 21 places for math and 29 places for English. Little is known, however, about the impacts of small classes for later years of schooling.

The work by Lee and colleagues provides some of the most compelling findings on the effect of small-school strategies to create more intimate learning environments and thus encourage better student outcomes. Specifically, they found that school size appears to facilitate the adoption of other practices that benefit student academic and social outcomes, such as more individualized attention and more collegiality among teachers. However, Lee does not conclude that small schools, in and of themselves, are the silver bullet to student success. *In short, if the small school does not provide a safe and orderly environment and is not filled with good teachers, challenging curriculum and a motivating environment, little will be gained by a student attending a small school.*

RESEARCH-BASED, RIGOROUS CURRICULA AND CHALLENGING INSTRUCTION

Rigorous curricula can potentially boost the effectiveness of teachers as well as guide students through their learning. High-level courses such as chemistry, physics, Algebra II are significant predictors of college attendance and graduation. The What Works Clearinghouse (www.whatworks.ed.gov) at the U.S. Department of Education uses stringent criteria, including quality of evaluation design (i.e., experimental, regression continuity or quasi-experimental) and relevance of intervention for desired outcome. Using this screen, the Clearinghouse has identified programs in beginning reading, elementary school reading, elementary and middle school math, character education and early childhood education that are at least potentially effective. Many of the programs have been designed

for special populations, such as English language learners and special needs populations. Importantly, considering the abundance of curricula being used throughout the country in all levels of schooling, there are relatively few studies that meet even the more lenient criteria of the What Works Clearinghouse. More rigorous research is needed, therefore, to determine effective curricula that can be used with diverse populations.

Good teachers are needed to implement good curricula. Teacher quality has been one of the key features of No Child Left Behind, with a critical mass of 'highly qualified teachers' an explicit goal in

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the legislation. Research has confirmed that teachers play a prominent role in the academic success of their students, lexxiv with students attending classes with an effective teacher having math and reading scores from one-third to nearly one-half of a standard deviation higher compared to students with

ineffective teachers. However, the criteria laid-out in NCLB do not necessarily relate to better academic outcomes for students. For example, teacher certification and post-graduate degrees are not significantly related to improved grades or standardized test scores. Instead, student outcomes under a given teacher appear to be more illustrative of teacher quality, with student outcomes during a given teacher's first two years of teaching serving as a strong predictor of future years of positive student outcomes under that teacher. In important note is that most research on teacher effectiveness has been conducted on elementary school students. We know little about the effects of teacher quality on high school students. Unfortunately, there is a maldistribution of teachers across districts and schools, as well as classrooms within schools. In Instantial Inst

The evaluations of CSR programs demonstrate that silver bullet approaches do not work. Instead, strategies that acknowledge the complex needs of young people will be most effective at promoting, in the case of schools, academic gains. Considering that too many young people fall through the cracks of these school programs, we also echo the finding engaging families and the wider community are essential for creating a positive system of supports.

COMMUNITY

Schools and families are clustered within communities. Determining the unique effects of communities in addition to or interactive with families and schools can be difficult, but a plethora of research has determined that the economic state, social organization and available resources within a community directly and indirectly affects child well-being. For this section, then, we focus on the effects of poverty, social disorganization/collective efficacy, and out-of-school time activities.⁶

POVERTY

Living in a high-poverty neighborhood has been found in numerous studies to be linked to lower academic achievement, higher rates of delinquency and higher rates of risky behaviors, such has alcohol and drug use. Indeed, in a review of multiple studies of residence in high poverty neighborhoods, there was a consistent finding across studies – and thus across geographic location – showing a relationship between living in a high poverty neighborhood and higher levels of internalizing problems (e.g., depression), externalizing behaviors (e.g., acting out and getting into fights), and risky behaviors (e.g., alcohol and drug use) and lower levels of academic achievement. The process through which these effects occur, however, are not as well confirmed. One theory that has been tested somewhat successfully is that young people in high poverty communities have fewer community resources, such as parks and after-school activities, poorer quality schools and higher levels of environmental hazards. The process of environmental hazards.

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION AND COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

When community residents have shared values, have strong social relationships, and seek shared goals, outcomes for individuals within the community improve. This is particularly true for children and youth; that is, if community residents collectively look-out for the well-being of the community's children and the community writ large has high expectations for the academic accomplishments and social behaviors of the children, children should do better in school and in life. Sampson calls this phenomenon Collective Efficacy. The finds that communities with high levels of collective efficacy have lower rates of neighborhood violence, fewer victims of crime, and lower homicide rates. On an individual level, children who live in communities with high collective efficacy or low levels of social disorganization — defined as having low crime and housing vacancy rates, and little vandalism and public drinking - is related to improved cognitive and behavioral outcomes for early childhood and improved school attendance and grades for middle and high school students.

⁶ Health care and child care settings could be considered part of the community, but we do not consider them here due to space limitations.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

Participating in after-school activities is associated with higher levels of academic achievement, better social skills, and higher rates of civic participation. High quality programs have age-appropriate levels of adult supervision, engage children and youth in decision-making about the activities, teach adaptive social skills, and, when relevant, provide substantive academic activities. For instance, Zaff and colleagues (2004) found that youth who consistently participated in after-school activities throughout adolescence were 2.5 times more likely to attend college, vote and engage in volunteer



activities in young adulthood. Other researchers have found similar findings. **civ* There is evidence, though, that certain types of activities, such as football among male high school students, can result in more negative and fewer positive outcomes and that different mixes of activities predict different positive and negative outcomes. **cv* Moreover, most research on after-school activity participation has been subject to selection bias, meaning that more motivated students or students with more motivated parents will be more likely to attend such programs; though a meta-analysis of empirically based **after-**

school programs found impacts on attitudes (school bonding and positive self-perceptions), behaviors (positive social behaviors, problem behaviors and drug use) and school achievement (school grades). xcvi Regardless, after-school activities have an additive effect on child and youth academic, social and civic outcomes and therefore, communities should be prepared to offer a variety of choices that students of different backgrounds and having different interests will opt to participate. This need for choices is amplified by the finding that children from low-income families are the least likely to participate in such activities, whether because of availability, safety issues, or cost of participation. xcvii The effects of out-of-school time programs do not occur in a developmental vacuum. Instead, any effect will be minimal or non-existent if the out-of-school time programs are not linked with the other contexts in a child's life.xcviii For instance, one could imagine that an academic-focused after-school program that takes place for two hours one day per week would not be very effective if the lessons were not connected in some way to a quality educational experience within a school or at least a reinforcing environment within the home. Citizen Schools programming, which intentionally and systematically aligns a student's after-school apprenticeships with schooling during middle school and with the transition to the educational demands of high school, has shown the effectiveness of this linkage across contexts, with participants in the 8th grade program having higher attendance rates equal to approximately nine days of school and better English class grades – approximately a 'C' compared to a 'C-' - than students in a matched non-program sample. xcix

When considering the health of a community context, programs as well as systems should be addressed. After-school programs provide supportive and substantive environments in which young people develop. But, the community is broader than programs. Systemic issues such as poverty, safety and social disorganization are structural issues that most likely need to be addressed through economic development, grassroots civic strategies, and public safety. If policymakers are paralyzed by the difficulty of changing these systems, the impact of school and family policies will be minimized.

⁷ 'Emprically based' programs are those that were developed from best practices as concluded by rigorous research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on existing evidence, we know that children need consistent investments throughout childhood in order to improve their well-being during the first decades of life as well as increasing their odds of a smooth and productive transition into adulthood. These investments cannot be haphazard or occur in silos; if they do, too many young people inevitably fall through the cracks. To ensure that young people develop into productive citizens, we recommend the following policy proposals to address the comprehensive needs of young people across their development and across their families, schools and communities:

FUND DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS TO TEST THE IMPACT OF STRATEGIES THAT ADDRESS THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS, TRANSITIONS AND MULTIPLE CONTEXTS OF CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Although comprehensive child and youth development programs have been rigorously evaluated, such as the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, Quantum Opportunities, Teen Outreach Project and Fast Track, the impact among a majority of child and youth is elusive. The ability to take these initiatives to scale is unknown. Based on our analysis of the available research presented in this paper, we would posit that programs that link positive attributes of the family, school and community contexts will produce the largest impacts for a majority of children in a community. At this point, however, there are few or no rigorous evaluations of such community-wide initiatives. Communities in Schools and Communities that Care are both currently undergoing impact evaluations and we await the results within the next five years. Regardless of the outcomes of these evaluations, additional demonstration projects that cut across the first two decades of life are needed. Currently, bills in the Senate and House would facilitate community-school-family partnerships: including the Keeping Parent and Communities Engaged Act introduced by Sen. Edward Kennedy and the Full-Service Community Schools Act introduced by Rep. Steny Hoyer would provide funds to communities to encourage linking resources within schools with resources throughout the community and in families. Unfortunately, few funds will be available to rigorously evaluate these programs. We recommend that funds be made available for a third-party evaluation of these community and parent engagement initiatives and that the evaluations should assess the implementation of these policies on the local level as well as track the well-being of children served by these programs over a 5-year period. This time period would allow for the programs to be fully implemented before the well-being of the children is assessed.

Moreover, we agree with Isaacs' (2007) assessment that the Federal government should seed the development of programs that will results in cost-effective policies to improve the lives of children and youth. However, we would build off of her work which includes comprehensive child and youth development programs that cut across context. We recommend a competitive grant program, for example of \$100 million per year for five years, to provide states and localities with funds to facilitate public/private partnerships that integrate supports and opportunities for children and families across ages and developmental contexts. Coupled with a third-party evaluation, such an initiative could provide tremendous insight into the ways that resources from different departments within federal, state, and local government can be integrated with community to fund programs that link developmental periods throughout the first two decades of life.

- 19 -

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⁸ For example, Isaacs, based on her analysis of the most cost-effective interventions that the Federal government should fund, recommended the following investments for demonstrations projects: \$300 million per year for ages 0-2 interventions, \$300 million per year for teacher quality initiatives, \$100 million for teenage pregnancy prevention programs, and \$100 million for school reform efforts

ENCOURAGE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES

States and communities cannot necessarily use cookie-cutter program approaches for their children who live in diverse geographies with unique social contexts. However, research has shown that evidence-based strategies produce greater gains across outcome areas than programs based on intuition, political maneuvering or anecdotal evidence^{ci}. We support the U.S. Department of Education refocusing its grant making on effective practices as outlined in its "What Works Clearinghouse." We recommend that Congress include language in their child-focused public policies that encourages Federal agencies, states and communities to use rigorously tested programs and, when appropriate, program components in their work to improve the lives of children and youth.⁹

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LEVERAGE EXISTING FUNDING STREAMS TO LINK DEVELOPMENTAL PERIODS AND ADDRESS THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

We do not want to suggest that no programs exist in Federal agencies that promote the linking of resources throughout a community in order to address the comprehensive needs of young people. Examples of initiatives and centers that encourage such work span agencies, including The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and Family and Youth Services Bureau at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, The Office of Workforce Investment at the U.S. Department of Labor, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the Department of Justice. While we applaud these efforts, we suggest that there are ways to leverage these existing programs and increase their impacts in the communities in which they're implemented. For instance, we recommend, through the Federal Youth Coordination Act to add a grant program to states which can be used to encourage collaboration between the state and communities as well as to help coordinate disparate funding streams to achieve complementary goals; for example, a community-wide youth development program to prevent juvenile crimes and drug use should also have the effect of improving academic outcomes. These grants would be awarded based on the availability of existing funds in a community and/or state for collaborative youth development programs, whether from other Federal grants or from state or local government funds or private funding. The parent engagement and community engagement coordinators that would be funded through the Keeping PACE Act are a step in this direction as are the grants that would be provided by the Full-Service Community Schools Act. And, the recently passed Head Start For School Readiness Act includes explicit language and examples for linking a child's time in Head Start with their transition into elementary school. At the very least, communities, based on their capabilities and strategic planning, should be given the flexibility of linking their Federal funding streams.

FULLY IMPLEMENT THE FEDERAL YOUTH COORDINATION ACT

The Tom Osborne Federal Youth Coordination Act (FYCA) was developed based on the recommendations of the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth. FYCA's primary function is the creation of a Federal Youth Development Council comprised of heads from nine Departments and chaired by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The Council is tasked with

⁹ While randomized-control group designs are the gold standard for assessing impacts of a program on a desired outcome, we note that rigorous research can include various methods; e.g., randomized control-group trials, quasi-experimental and longitudinal studies, and systematic qualitative studies.

encouraging coordination across agencies, including funding streams and data, as well as minimizing duplication of programs. The Act was budgeted for \$1 million but the funds have yet to be appropriated. Considering the need that we have shown to coordinate services to address the comprehensive needs of young people, we recommend that Congressional appropriators provide the authorized funds for FYCA. Also, in order to avoid turf struggles and to solidify its existence, we recommend that the council be moved from the Department of Health and Human Services to the White House.

CREATE INCENTIVES FOR STATES AND COMMUNITIES TO TRACK THE PROGRESS AND NEEDS OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

No Child Left Behind mandated that states become better assessors and reporters of their students' academic proficiencies. However, few states currently have the political will and the data infrastructure to track the progress of students over time (referred to as 'growth models'), determine the factors that correspond with risk of failure or prediction of success, or align child outcomes with the inputs from teachers and schools. The Data Quality Campaign has been working with states to implement such systems and have identified successes in Florida, Texas and Georgia. City-wide efforts, likewise, provide models of integrated data systems. In Philadelphia, Project U-Turn, with support from Professors Robert Balfanz and Ruth Curran Neild from Johns Hopkins University, integrated educational and social service data to identify the risk factors for dropping-out of high school. cii Similar efforts are underway in the Bay Area in Northern California under the direction of Milbrey McLaughlin at Stanford's John Gardner Center, and through the Chicago school system. President Bush has proposed to increase the amount appropriated for the Institute for Education Science at the Department of Education to implement a competitive grant program for states to develop longitudinal data systems. We encourage Congress to support the President's proposal for \$54.2 million and the Senate bill, S.2014, to fund the development of longitudinal state data systems and to give states flexibility to work with school districts to integrate social service data with educational data.

INCLUDE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES WITHIN NCLB REAUTHORIZATION, INCLUDE LINKING COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES

Federal education policy appropriately focuses on strengthening instruction. However, as we have demonstrated, evidence suggests that academic performance can be enhanced when students receive support across multiple developmental contexts. Therefore, NCLB should facilitate the integration of supports and opportunities across these contexts. Specifically, Title I of NCLB should be strengthened to require State and local educational agencies to include an assessment of

NCLB SHOULD PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT POLICIES

the non-academic needs facing students and families and strategies for leveraging partnerships with community-based organizations and others to address these needs. Additionally, NCLB should provide incentives for local educational agencies to develop community involvement policies, similar to the parent involvement policies already required by the law, to maximize supports and opportunities for students, their families, and the community. This could be accomplished by the WE CARE Act (Working to Encourage Community Action and Responsibility in Education; HR. 3762).

APPENDIX A

FRAMEWORKS OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL	FIVE PROMISES	SEARCH INSTITUTE	6C'S	CONNELL ET AL	HAWKINS CATALANO
Supportive Relationships	Caring Adults	Support	Connection; Caring	Multiple Supportive Relationships with Adults and Peers	Bonding
Physical and Physiological Safety; Support for Efficacy and Mattering	Safe Places and Productive Use of Out of School Time; Health Start	Empowerment	Contribution	Adequate Nutrition, Health, and Shelter; Meaningful Opportunities for Involvement and Membership; Physical and Emotional Safety	Recognition for Positive Behavior; Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement
Appropriate Structure; Positive Social Norms	Caring Adults; Safe Places and Productive Use of Out of School Time	Boundaries & Expectations	Competence; Character		Behavioral Competence; Moral Competence; Prosocial Norms
Opportunities to Belong; Support for Efficacy and Mattering	Opportunities to Help Others	Constructive Use of Time	Connection; Competence	Challenging and Engaging Activities and Learning Experiences; Meaningful Opportunities for Involvement and Membership	Social Competence; Behavioral Competence; Spirituality; Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement
Support for Efficacy and Mattering; Opportunities for Skill Building		Commitment to Learning	Competence	Challenging and Engaging Activities and Learning Experiences	Cognitive Competence; Bonding
Positive Social Norms		Positive Values	Character; Caring		Moral Competence; Prosocial Norms
Opportunities for Skill Building; Opportunities to Belong	Effective Education; Safe Places and Productive Use of Out of School Time; Opportunities to Help Others	Social Competencies	Competence; Connection; Caring; Confidence		Social Competence; Bonding; Emotional Competence
Support for Efficacy and Mattering	Caring Adults; Opportunities to Help Others	Positive Identity	Confidence		Clear and Positive Identity; Belief in the Future; Self-Efficacy; Self-Determination

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ABOUT FIRST FOCUS

First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions. First Focus is working to promote bipartisan federal policy solutions in core issue areas, including children's health, education, family economics, and child welfare. For more information, visit www.firstfocus.net.

ABOUT THE ACADEMY FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Academy for Educational Development is a nonprofit organization working globally to improve education, health, civil society and economic development—the foundation of thriving societies. In collaboration with local and national partners, AED fosters sustainable results through practical, comprehensive approaches to social and economic challenges. AED implements more than 250 programs serving people in all 50 U.S. states and more than 150 countries. For more information, visit: www.aed.org

END NOTES

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